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Arts and Books

# MATC students bring footwear alive in 3-D animation

By [Stanley A. Miller II](#) of the Journal SentinelPosted: May 11, 2010 | [\(0\) Comments](#)

Stinky Shoe and Coach LaRoo, Toe Jam and Hiker Hank are lacing up and stepping out Wednesday at Discovery World, where the 3-D characters will be center stage as part of MATC's portfolio night.

The toons, which are based on different types of footwear, are brought to life through the efforts of animation students such as Alex Printz of Menomonee Falls. Over about five weeks and hundreds of hours, Printz and other students took concept sketches and rendered them into bright, sharp, colorful creatures and crafted the rules making them move on screen.

"All my spare computer time has been spent on this," Printz said as he worked on Stinky Shoe. "This is going to be the crowning jewel of my work at MATC."

Stinky and his crew are the stars of a pilot for a series of video vignettes called "Shoe Horn Shout Outs." The 90-second-or-so spots were commissioned by Active Across America, a social marketing company in Milwaukee that teaches the benefits of healthy living, including proper diet and exercise.

Printz began by bringing actual shoes into the animation lab - a canvass shoe for Stinky and a combat boot for Sarge, a less prominent character he also designed for the project.

"I had to figure out the underlying structure," Printz said.

Printz said the assignment started as a polishing of his established set of skills but soon evolved into a challenge raising his abilities "to the next level."

"It's a big project, and it's been a lot of fun," said Brian Mennenoh, chair of the animation department at MATC. "Alex's work on Stinky Shoe has been way more than a cartoon shoe needs to be. I've been absolutely impressed with the work. I am also impressed with how they've all handled the deadlines we've given them."

These "Shoe Horn Shout Outs" are the next generation of Stinky Shoe series, which began in 2003 as instructional sports videos combining live-action scenes and animated characters for children 3 to 8. The

partnership with MATC adds several new personalities as well as touching Stinky and LaRoo, the founding characters.

"Stinky Shoe has grown up a bit," said Deanne Monaghan, a partner at Active Across America and creative director. "The original version of Stinky Shoe was very workable, but several years have passed. We are thrilled with the evolution."

In addition to meeting tight deadlines, Monaghan said MATC's team took feedback well and "impressed us with their imagination when allowed to take creative liberties" with the new characters.

"It's been exciting to develop them with the students," Monaghan said. "They've really treated us like we are a client."

The Stinky Shoe series taps the talents of several departments at MATC - including television production, animation and music - and that's the type of cross-disciplinary collaboration important to James MacDonald, associate dean of business, graphic arts, television and video production.

"They are building things in teams, and that's how real work gets done," MacDonald said. "Experience like this is very important because it makes them valuable to industry."

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## IF YOU GO

**What:** Milwaukee Area Technical College's Portfolio Night

**Where:** Discovery World at Pier Wisconsin, 500 N. Harbor Drive

**When:** 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday

**Admission:** Free

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